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ABSTRACT

A guide to the development of a class project in novel writing is provided in this paper. A seven-week production schedule is suggested with projects including: (1) setting, plot, beginning character development, and selecting editors: (2) continuing character development and outlining plot: (3) working on the rough draft: (4) filling in the rough draft: (5) editing and revising: (6) revising and typing the final edition: and (7) proofreading, selling, and collating. The paper also provides a list of practical suggestions for implementing the project. A sample of group character delineation is given, a rough plot of a sample novel and later plot development is sketched, and a sample of division of student responsibility is shown. Sample titles submitted by students for a class novel are also listed. (MKM)

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ABC's of WRITING a HIGH SCHOOL BEST SELLER

Eleanore Moe
Douglas High School

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ABC's of WRITING a HIGH SCHOOL BEST SELLER

"IF A SMALL SCHOOL ON THE WIND-SWEPT PLAINS OF SOUTH DAKOTA CAN PUBLISH A NOVEL, YOU CAN TOO." (Eleanore Moe, Douglas High School)

BEFORE YOU BEGIN---

Have two or three teachers become excited over the idea of their students writing a novel.
Solicit moral and logistical support from the administration.

FIRST DAY --

Sell the students on the idea of becoming published authors.
Have all the students involved meet together for the "kick off."
Discuss the various types of novels. Through an elimination process, let the students choose the type of novel they wish to write.
Choose present, past, or future time.
Limit the number of characters to no more than one or two per class (depending on the size of the class). We had one character per class with one class writing the newspaper clippings that laid the background and helped to unravel the story. The plot will determine the character types.

As a large group, decide on
a. the setting
b. the number of characters
c. the skeleton plot

DEVELOP the CHARACTERS. This will no doubt take a full week of hard work. Make each character become a living being. Each character will have more characteristics than you feel you will need for the plot but all the characteristics influence the character's actions. Remember: THE CHARACTER NEED NOT BE REAL BUT MUST BE BELIEVABLE--HIS ACTIONS MUST ACCENTUATE HIS CHARACTERISTICS.

SELECT the EDITORS. Have the students in each class select the student they feel is the best writer in the class. Editors are the key to the final production as they:
a. help set deadlines
b. weave the various writing styles into a flowing script
c. make sure deadlines are met.

WEEK 2--

DEVELOP the PLOT. (See PLOT of NOVEL)
ADD to CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT
OUTLINE PLOT

WEEK 3--

ROUGH DRAFT

WEEK 4--

FILL IN the ROUGH DRAFT. The original rough draft was too sketchy, so students needed to supply details.

WEEK 5--

EDITING AND REVISING

WEEK 6--

REVISING and FINAL TYPING

WEEK 7--

PROOFREADING, SELLING, COLLATING.

DOS and DONTS

DOS

1. Have all students who are involved participate the first day in a meeting for two or three hours (preferably in the morning when everyone is fresh). We called this an "in-school field trip."
2. Set deadlines and adhere to them.
3. Develop the characters BEFORE you develop the plot. "If the characters are not strong, the story will be weak." The tendency is to plunge into the plot but DON'T.
4. Engage an offset press (in-plant if available). Administrative assistance is usually necessary. Mimeograph or ditto is not recommended.
5. Develop contests to spur enthusiasm.
    a. Title contest (see TITLE page)
    b. Cover design (the cover designs were submitted on poster board. After the students had voted on their favorite cover design, the posters were used as publicity in the building. Submitting a cover design was voluntary.)
    c. Author pseudonym (Pat Douglas represents our school, Douglas High School; our symbol is a Patriot) (Submitting was voluntary)
6. Give credit to each student. Students and teachers are listed together to symbolize the combined efforts of the project.
7. Provide autograph pages to make each copy special to the owner. Students have a sense of importance in autographing copies of their production. We didn't do it but an autograph party during the lunch hour would stimulate sales and students' self-image.
8. PLACE the RESPONSIBILITY on the STUDENTS. Students must "buy into" the project.
9. Have patience but temper your patience with "slave driving." Teachers and editors need to set the deadlines and stick to them.
10. Impress on the editors that they will need to sacrifice lunch periods, free time, and must make this production number ONE priority until the final product is off the press.
11. Brainstorm, especially in the initial stages.
12. Recognize each person's ideas and try to incorporate as many of these as possible. Have the paramount goal the finished product.
13. Encourage community public relations. The students promoted the sale of the novel as a publishing company would promote a new book. The uniqueness of the production received publicity through:
    a. Television talk shows
    b. On-site TV news team
    c. Full page Sunday newspaper story plus pictures
14. Contact any of the three teachers who were involved in the writing of the novel for more details:
    Ted Erlewine, Steve Miller, Eleanore Moe
    (605) 923-1464
    Douglas High School, Box Elder, S.Dak. 57719

DONTS

1. Don't get discouraged. OPTIMISM and ENTHUSIASM will keep the students charging.
2. Don't let students who are not the best writers and think they will not be able to contribute much escape. Impress on them that their ideas can be creative--the rough diamond can be cut and polished by the eiditors.
3. Don't be PICKY about MECHANICS until the final draftS. EXPEDIENCE of the CREATIVE PROCESS is the goal.

CHARACTER DELINEATION

Each class developed their character as though this person were a part of today's society. Students worked hard for a week trying to picture all aspects of their character so they would know exactly how this person would act or react throughout the plot. Students developed various techniques to define the characteristics of their character.

JOLEEN RITZ

Special because of her PHOTOGRAPHIC MEMORY.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Short stylish hair
5'6" very fashionable
Big blue eyes, contacts
Long pretty eyelashes
Not shy but not outgoing

BACKGROUND

Folsom, California (warm)

ACTIVITIES

Tennis and water skiing

Well-proportioned
Athletic
Normal peer group
Easy listening and classical music

HOBBY

Anthropology

HERITAGE

Adopted
Only child
Mother, professor of psychology
Father, professor of science

MARTI DERRICK

Marti is special because of her TELEPATHIC abilities.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Long, blond hair, blue eyes, wears contacts, 5'5", has good taste in clothes, (but can't always afford the best), and always wears pants. Pretty; natural look in makeup.

PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS

Self-motivated; can intimidate people with her mental telepathy; ambitious for power and money; quietly self-confident but not obnoxious; close mouthed, keeps to herself but has a few friends.

EMOTIONS

Likes excitement; kind to animals; is happy in Las Vegas, but is anxious to be on her own (she has a job parking cars).

FAMILY BACKGROUND

Only child; her father is a card dealer; parents are happily married; she is closer to her father; goes to big school.

PLOT of NOVEL---so far

Students had a very sketchy framework on which to build the plot. Perhaps this is good. At least, it worked for us.

FIRST DAY

Three young people, the same age, are kidnapped from their respective hometowns in different parts of the country and are brought together by one man whose face they never see. He tells them they have been chosen because they are special in their individual talents and -------

TWO DAYS LATER

They have an unusual relationship to each other. These three young people sense that they are alike in some strange way but they can't figure it out. (They all have blond hair and blue eyes) Anyway, the man tells them that they must find a fourth young person who is like them, special. He knows this person will be attending a United Nations Conference on Young People, attended by outstanding young people from throughout the world. He tells them they will know him when they find him, not explaining why but just saying that they will "sense" that he is like them.

MISSION: Each class has a character whom they must develop and follow from the point of kidnapping through the experience of looking for the fourth person.

RESPONSIBILITY WITHIN EACH CLASS

Each class was divided by the teacher into groups. Make sure that talented and persevering students are in each group. Each group was responsible for a segment of the story. The editor of the class makes sure the segments of the story fit together logically. Then each group edits another group's writing and finally the editor makes sure the style flows smoothly. The teacher is the manipulator.

I. Linda
Paula
Vicki

II. Billie
Mary
Chris
Joe

III. Marie
John
Sam
Shelley

IV. Chris
Jacki
Arthur
Greg

I. Kidnapped

III. Go to conference

II. Taken to man
(face is never seen)
(large dark room)

IV. At conference
(find fourth person)

STYLE SHEET

1. All sections must be written in the past tense; that is, the action has already taken place. Examples: He walked through the door. NOT he walks through the door. Rule of thumb--verbs should end in ed or the equivalent.

2. DIALOGUE should be handled by treating what is said and naming of the speaker as one sentence. Example: "I hate dogs," Joleen reminded her mother. A comma should separate the two parts and a period should end the sentence. Quotation marks are around just what is said and include the comma, question mark, or exclamation mark. "I hate dogs!" screamed Joeleen. If the speaker is not named, put quotation marks around what is said. Each time the speaker changes, start a new paragraph.

Editors outlined the plot from the material they gleaned from each group within the class. In this way the editors could visualize the inconsistencies or voids in the overall picture of the plot development.

JOLEEN RITZ (So far)

I. Kidnapping
   a. Walking home from school
   b. Grabbed by two men
   c. Taken to airport
   d. Trauma – Worries, scared, etc.
   e. Struggles – long plane trip
   f. Car meets plane – Taken to building in South Bronx

II. The meeting
   a. Walks in, hears voice
   b. Faceless man in chair says "sit down".
   * c. Description of room
   * d. 2 occupied chairs
   e. Explains his reasons, ideas, etc.

III. Trip to U.N.
   a. Walks out, car waiting
   b. She thinks about what's happened so far
   c. Starts driving – Parade delays her
   d. Photographic memory gets her to convention on time

IV. At the conference
   a. Nervous, thinks about everything
   b. Description of conference room
   c. Starts search
   d. Wonders what will happen to them.

TITLE

Each student submitted a title. The titles were typed as on this page and the students circled the favorite title. Then the titles that received the most votes in the secret ballot were placed on a second ballot. Use your discretion on the number of titles on the second ballot. This is the only fair method to choose the most popular title. Do NOT place any names with the titles. The teacher will have the names of the students with the original titles submitted.

TITLES FOR NOVEL

Terror of the Faceless Man
Who's Missing
The Fourth Blonde
The Special Kidnapping
The Gifted Three
Assignment Three
Three on a Search
The Unknown Link
The Missing
The Search
The Man Without a Face
What Happened at the U.N.
The Hopeless Case
The Misunderstood Mishap
The Misunderstanding
The Special Kidnappings
The Unknown People
Mr. X!!!!!!!
What's So Special
South Bronx Meeting
The Gifted
The Missing Link
Three Special and One Unknown
The Fourth Link
The Perfect Society
Dreams of Madmen and Fools
The Deciding Factor
The Able
The Unpredictables
Why Us?
The Unlimiteds
The Missing Person
Search for the Unknown
Gifts of Science
Destiny to Meet
The Outcome
The Clone
The Secret of the Man with no Face
The Hidden Partner
The Fourth Blonde
The Searchers
In Search Of
The Unknown Search
Search for Identity
The Mystery of the Man with no Face
Two of a Kind
Where have the Special People Gone
Kidnapped to Help
The Last Minute was Flaming
Speciality Unknown
U.N. Mania
Working with the Unknown